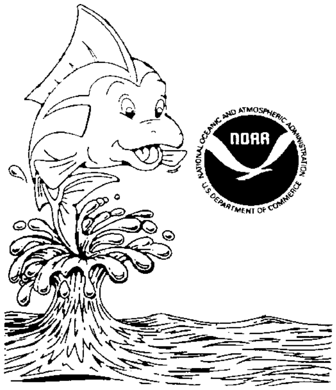

# MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

**NOAA**
**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**
**NORTHEAST REGION**
**HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION**

**October 2002**

**GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930**

## MARINE TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT: DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Under it's Marine Transportation System initiative, the Headquarters Division of Habitat Protection and National Ocean Service (NOS) are working together on a project to design environmental management practices for port development. The objective of this project is to identify practices that, if adopted, would improve environmental management of port activities. We hope to accomplish this by working with the American Association of Port Authorities, the Coastal States Organization and other interested stakeholders, and by integrating issues normally handled by different NOAA line offices.

The project method will entail at least two teams of NOAA staff working in "pilot" ports to address an existing port development project or proposal as it relates to a NOAA mission area, e.g., habitat restoration, mitigation, environmental windows, dredge disposal, environmental risk assessment, brownfields, etc. The Port Teams will be made up of local NMFS and NOS staff and will be assisted by a contractor who will facilitate interactions with stakeholders. The ultimate goal of the Port Team will be to develop recommendations for best practices -- or for research necessary to develop best practices, for the specific port development issue chosen, based on stakeholder input. A request has been forwarded to Regional Assistant Administrators of habitat programs for pilot port suggestions. Ideally, involved NMFS field offices would realize an effective net increase in resources devoted to an issue and a reduction in potential conflict. **(Kathi Rodrigues 978/ 281-9324 or Karen Abrams 301/ 713-4300 x 149)**

## NATIONAL WETLAND MITIGATION WORKSHOP

NOAA Fisheries held a National Wetland Mitigation workshop on November 5-7, 2002, in Savannah, Georgia. The workshop was attended by NOAA Fisheries representatives from all five regional offices, as well as workshop organizers from headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Northeast Regional Office was represented by Mike Ludwig, Mike Johnson and David MacDuffee. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss current processes and past achievements in compensating fishery resource impacts for each region. Workshop topics included fishery habitat functional assessments used in mitigation plans, the use of various mitigation methods to compensate for habitat impacts (e.g., wetland and upland buffers, preservation, in-kind/out-of-kind mitigation, temporal loss to fishery resources, mitigation ratios, and conservation easements/deed restrictions), mitigation performance standards and monitoring. Participants noted that differences exist in the approaches and achievements of compensatory mitigation between regions, and identified needs for better resource information and data availability for some habitats and regions. The workshop participants recommended that a mitigation guidance manual be developed by NOAA Fisheries to help provide clearer and improved mitigation tools, goals, and consistency between projects. **(Mike Johnson, 978/ 281-9130)**

## JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

### US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW YORK DISTRICT

NEFSC scientists and Habitat staff met with the NY District ACOE at the Sandy Hook Lab to discuss restoration opportunities in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. Out of the 84 restoration opportunities identified in the Hudson-Raritan Environmental Restoration Reconnaissance Report, eight were discussed at this meeting:

- Piles/Morses Creeks, Arthur Kill, Elizabeth, Union County, NJ - fill removal, salt marsh restoration, *Phragmites* removal, re-establishment of historical tidal hydrodynamics.

- Hudson River Breakwaters, Hudson River, Westchester County, Manhattan and the Bronx, NY- to construct a series of carefully designed submerged breakwaters offshore to reduce current flows, creating a refuge for young-of-year striped bass and other fishery species.

- Raritan Bay oyster bed restoration, Raritan Bay, Monmouth County, NJ - Re-establishment of historic oyster beds.

- Raritan Bay submerged rock berm, Raritan Bay, Monmouth County, NJ - Construct an offshore submerged berm from rock or concrete rubble to provide structural habitat for juvenile and adult fishes.

- Verrazano-Narrows artificial reef, Lower New York Bay, Brooklyn and Staten Island, NY- Construct artificial reef from rock or rubble mound to increase availability of structural refuge habitat for juvenile and adult finfish and crustaceans.

- Hoffman-Swinburne Islands, Lower New York Bay, Staten Island, NY - Portions of islands could be regraded to intertidal elevation and beach created using sandy dredged material and planted with native trees and shrubs to create nesting habitat for herons and egrets. An underwater rock berm could be established, bridging the two islands, and providing a structural refuge for juvenile fish. Portions of this berm could be raised to the intertidal level, providing “haul-outs” for harbor seals.

- Gravesend Bay, Lower New York Bay, Brooklyn, NY - Place low-relief submerged hard structure at various locations within the bay. These could be concrete "reef balls," or other appropriate hard structure to provide juvenile fish and invertebrates with structural refuge that is currently lacking in Gravesend Bay and similar habitats throughout the harbor.

Lab scientists may be requested to assist the ACOE in undertaking baseline research for the proposed restoration projects. Restoration Center staff may provide technical assistance and support to ensure optimal fisheries habitat values for the proposed restorations. Further discussions are ongoing. **(Stan Gorski, 732/ 872-3037)**

**STONE HARBOR BOROUGH UPDATE**

Stone Harbor Borough has not complied with the conditions of their permit to have the dredged material tested for contaminants or to remove the dredged material from the disposal site. The testing was to be done on the dredged material that had been placed into a temporary confined disposal facility (CDF) at Stone Harbor Point to ensure that its use for the restoration project at the site would not impact fisheries resources and the endangered piping plovers and other birds due to high levels of contamination. All ten sections within the CDF were found to contain less than 75 percent sand, and eight of the ten sections contain less than 26 percent sand, which was unexpected from preliminary sampling. Contamination is more likely to adhere to silty dredged material than sandy dredged material. The case is now being referred to the United States Attorney's Office to compel removal of the material to an upland disposal site and the imposition of civil penalties and/or criminal fines as appropriate. **(Anita.Riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)**

**MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460**

**EASTERN LONG ISLAND EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE**

In response to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) decision to convey a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (Certificate) for the Islander East proposal, the Iroquois Gas Transmission System has requested that the FERC defer its regulatory proceedings for the subject project. The FERC agreed to this request, extending the public comment period for the project's draft Environmental Impact Statement until the end of January, 2003. The subject Iroquois proposal entails construction and operation of some 29.1 miles of 20-inch diameter pipeline across Long Island Sound between Milford, New Haven County, Connecticut and Shoreham, Suffolk County, New York and ancillary subaqueous and land-based facilities. This proposal is a system alternative to the Islander East project. Both proposals are intended to supply natural gas to markets on Long Island. **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)**

**ISLANDER EAST DENIED COASTAL CONSISTENCY**

The State of Connecticut recently determined that the Islander East Project, a proposal to construct and operate a natural gas pipeline across Long Island Sound, was not consistent with

the state's Coastal Zone Management Program.  The project proponents have requested meetings with the involved state and federal agencies to discuss the pertinent issues. This proposal is a system alternative to Iroquois' Eastern Long Island Extension Project.
**(Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)**

**OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION**
Staff recently attended a pre-application coordination meeting in Albany, New York among representatives of the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) and the state and federal agencies that would be involved in the review and/or authorization of offshore wind farms that would generate electricity for the commercial market.  LIPA is interested in exploring water-based wind farms as a renewable source of electricity for New York markets.  The second phase of LIPA's ongoing feasibility study will be coming to a close presently.  Following the project update session, the project proponents and agency representatives reviewed the future coordination and information needs.   **(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)**

**EFH ASSESSMENT PROVIDED FOR LONG ISLAND BEACH NOURISHMENT APPLICATIONS**
The New York District, Corps of Engineers recently submitted an EFH assessment for two beach nourishment projects proposed for Long Island's South Shore. The proposed activities involve dredging 2 million cubic yards of sand from offshore borrow areas and placing the material in the intertidal zone to create a beach along the shorelines of the Fire Island Pines, Saltaire, Fair Harbor, Dunewood, and Loneleyville communities.  Work is proposed between November 2002 and April 2003.  Staff have not yet determined whether the assessment materials are complete.
**(Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)**